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NSA review completed

**Thirty-Fifth Report****COMMUNIST VIOLATIONS OF THE VIETNAM AND LAOS
SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT AND RELATED DEVELOPMENTS**

(This report covers the period from
17 October through 23 October 1973)

*This memorandum has been prepared jointly by the
Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Defense.*

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24 October 1973

DIA review(s)
completed.

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SPECIAL NOTE

Preliminary evidence received too late for inclusion in the main body of this report indicates that the North Vietnamese are planning to resume personnel infiltration to the central highlands and southern South Vietnam on a substantial scale. According to an intercepted message of 22 October, 13,000 NVA troops destined for these areas are to pass through southern Laos during November. No regular infiltration groups known to be moving to central and southern South Vietnam have been detected since March 1973, but this new evidence suggests that such groups will appear in the near future. Communist forces in the COSVN area and the central highlands would need such a flow of infiltration to fill out units already deployed and to build replacement pools, if Hanoi were planning a significant level of offensive activity there during the coming dry season.

24 October 1973

Thirty-Fifth Report

COMMUNIST VIOLATIONS OF THE VIETNAM AND LAOS
SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT AND RELATED DEVELOPMENTS*

(This report covers the week from
17 October through 23 October 1973)

The Key Points

- Some 2,000 infiltrators were noted moving southward this week as Hanoi resumed the dispatch of one group per day on 20 October.
- Another Communist combat regiment has moved from Cambodia into South Vietnam's MR-3.
- The North Vietnamese continue to realign and refine their command and control structure in south Laos to facilitate the movement of both men and materiel this dry season.
- Particularly severe rains and flooding have curtailed North Vietnamese logistic activity in the North Vietnamese Panhandle, northern South Vietnam, and south Laos.
- Communist rice shortages appear to be one reason for North Vietnamese plans for military action in GVN MR-3. Strictly in the economic sphere, they are increasing their efforts to obtain rice and other supplies.
- Sizable quantities of armor and artillery--some of which may recently have arrived from China--have been sighted in storage areas near Hanoi.
- Combat activity remained at low levels in both South Vietnam and Laos last week.

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The Details

NOTE: This is the thirty-fifth in a series of memoranda summarizing evidence received during the reporting period of (I) Communist efforts to infiltrate new manpower and military materiel toward and into South Vietnam, (II) Communist-initiated combat activity in violation of the Vietnam and Laos settlement agreements, and (III) other developments affecting Communist military capabilities in Indochina.

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I. Infiltration and Redeployments of North Vietnamese Personnel and Military Supplies

A. Personnel Infiltration and Redeployments

1. Hanoi apparently intends to continue sending regular combat infiltration groups southward at the rate of one per day for the near term. A report to this effect was received and apparently confirmed during the past week, as three new regular groups traveling toward southern Laos were identified in North Vietnam. In addition, a fourth regular group and one small special-purpose group were noted starting southward, but the regular group--also moving toward southern Laos--had previously been included in our estimate.

2. As a result of these new groups, the number of infiltrators starting south from North Vietnam this week stands at some 2,000 personnel. Since the 15 June "second" ceasefire, about 26,000 infiltrators have started south, of whom some 24,000 have been combat troops. In the nine months which have elapsed since the signing of the original ceasefire agreement

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Communist and South Vietnamese Regular Combat Forces in South Vietnam

South Vietnam

Regular Combat Forces

VC/NVA ¹	RVNAF ²	VC/NVA	RVNAF
180,000	320,000	86,000	89,000
		325th	VNMC
		324B	Airborne
		320B	1st
		304th	2nd
		711th	3rd
		2nd	Regional Forces

1. Includes VC/NVA personnel in ground combat, combat support, and air defense units and local force companies and platoons.

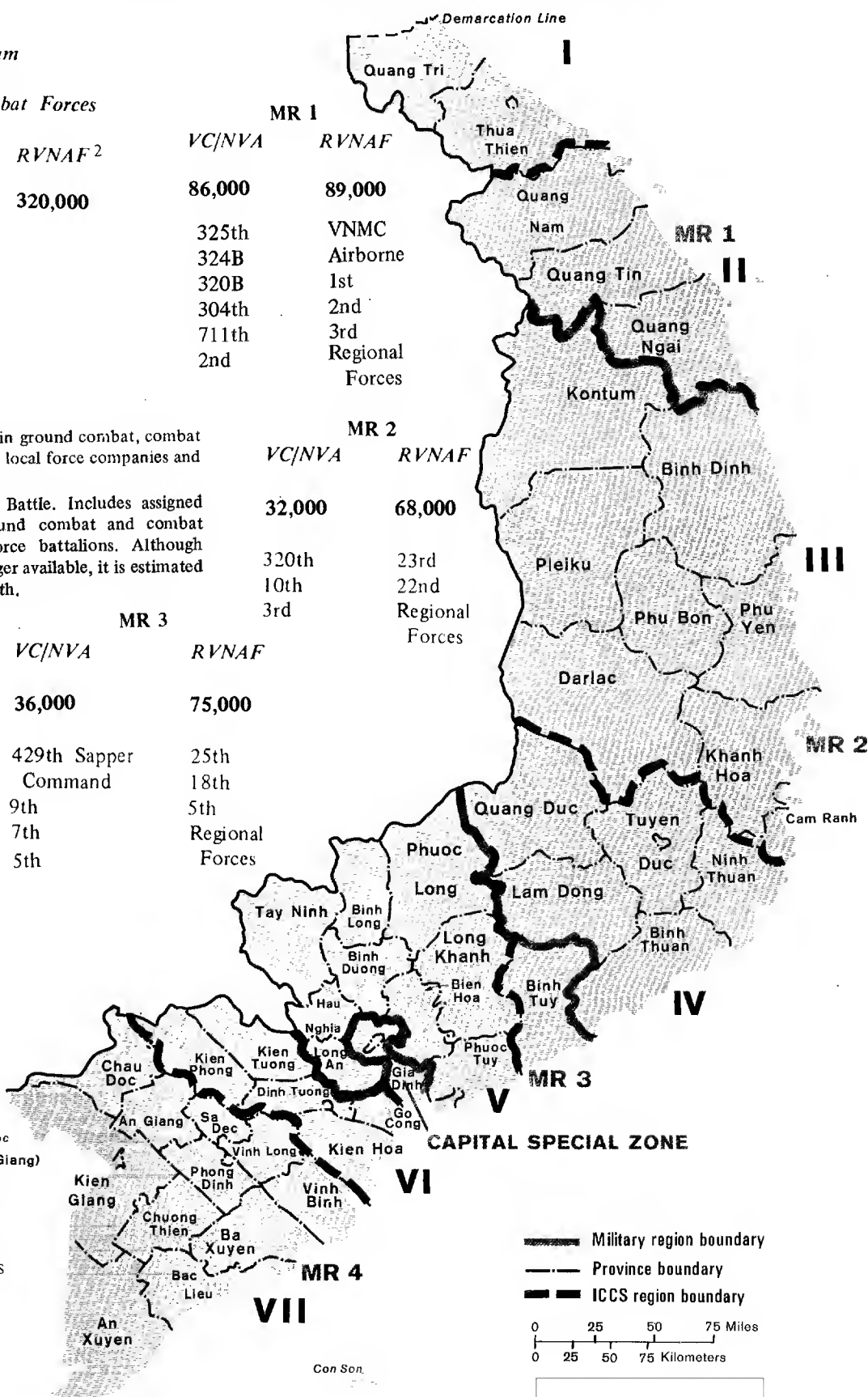
2. RVNAF Ground Order of Battle. Includes assigned personnel in ARVN/VNMC ground combat and combat support units, and Regional Force battalions. Although present for duty strength is no longer available, it is estimated to be about 85% of assigned strength.

MR 3

VC/NVA	RVNAF
36,000	75,000
429th Sapper Command	25th
9th	18th
7th	5th
5th	Regional Forces

MR 4

VC/NVA	RVNAF
26,000	88,000
1st	21st
	9th
	7th
	44th Special Tactical Zone
	Regional Forces



on 27 January, over 76,000 North Vietnamese personnel, including more than 68,000 combat troops and 8,000 specialists, have infiltrated southward. Over 51,000 of these personnel have started south since 27 January, while 25,000 were in the pipeline moving southward as of that date. (ANNEX B, [redacted] contains a more detailed discussion of the information pertaining to infiltration which was received during the past week.)

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3. Recent reports have confirmed earlier indications that the NVA 367th Sapper Regiment was leaving Cambodia. There is now good evidence that as of mid-September, the regiment had moved from its previous location near Phnom Penh to northwestern Tay Ninh Province in South Vietnam. The regiment, as well as other units, may have vacated former positions in Cambodia because of continued poor relations between KC-VC/NVA units. The deployment of the regiment also may be related to Communist plans to increase tactical activity in Tay Ninh Province.

4. The relocation of the unit--estimated at some 1,000 men--lowers VC/NVA combat strength in Cambodia to about 2,000, compared with an estimated strength of more than 7,000 at the time of the Vietnam ceasefire in January. In addition to the above, there may be as many as 2,000 VC/NVA operating as cadre, advisors and liaison with the KC. Similarly, VC/NVA administrative services strength has declined from around 30,000 in January to a present strength of about 18,000, as these units have also moved into South Vietnam. The remaining combat strength consists of the NVA 203rd Regiment and three artillery battalions. The status of these units is unknown, as mid-summer reports of the 203rd's moving from Siem Reap toward South Vietnam recently have been contradicted by other reporting, and no recent information has been received on the status or location of the three artillery battalions.

5. Further restructuring of the Communist's Rear Services organization in southern Laos was noted during the reporting period. The headquarters of Group 472--the regional authority responsible for logistics and infiltration operations in most of the

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Laotian Panhandle--moved south from near Muong Phine into an area midway down the Route 99 infiltration and logistics corridor through southern Laos. Preparations for this move may have begun as early as August, but the headquarters did not actually move until sometime between early September and mid-October. The relocation of this headquarters is part of the normal dry season preparations with such a shift occurring around this period in past years. It reflects a Communist desire to gain greater command and control over rear service units prior to the beginning of heavy supply movements.

6. In related activity, the 574th Commo-Liaison Regiment has assumed responsibility for all commo-liaison activities in southern Laos. To accomplish this, personnel were shifted between battalions, and several battalions were moved to different areas. During the last dry season both the 572nd (now in South Vietnam) and the 574th were responsible for southern Laos. The current split in responsibility probably reflects North Vietnamese intentions to infiltrate personnel both through Laos and western South Vietnam.

B. Movement of Military Equipment and Supplies

Indochina

7. For the second week in a row, heavy rains from an unusually high number of seasonal typhoons sharply restricted the Communist logistic effort throughout most areas of the North Vietnamese Panhandle, South Vietnam, and south Laos. In the southern Panhandle of North Vietnam, some units reportedly moved their cargo to higher ground and took other protective measures to guard against damage from flooding. Even more severe problems were encountered in northern South Vietnam, where widespread flooding disrupted communications and in many cases caused a cessation of all supply shipments among units. The situation was little different in South Laos as one unit near the Ban Karai Pass reported on 17 October that all the roads in its area were impassable. Another unit farther south in the Panhandle reported



on 19 October that it would take 10 days to clear the roads for vehicular traffic.

8. The particularly heavy rains and widespread flooding this month clearly have disrupted North Vietnamese dry season preparations and probably will interfere with the resumption of large scale supply shipments from southern North Vietnam to Laos. The length of the delay will be a direct function of future weather patterns and the intensity of Communist recovery efforts.

II. Communist-Initiated Combat Activity in South Vietnam and Laos

A. South Vietnam

9. In South Vietnam, the total number of Communist-initiated ceasefire violations reported by the South Vietnamese Armed Forces since 27 January, 15 June, and for the last week (17-23 Oct) are shown below:

<u>Military Region</u>	<u>Total Since 27 January Ceasefire</u>		<u>Total Since 15 June Ceasefire</u>		<u>Last Week (17-23 Oct)</u>	
	Major	Minor	Major	Minor	Major	Minor
MR 1	1,402	4,905	377	1,546	24	111
MR 2	571	3,820	307	1,966	22	100
MR 3	570	4,139	168	1,563	8	94
MR 4	1,132	10,221	454	4,055	25	318
Totals	3,675	23,085	1,306	9,130	79 (87)	623 (557) <u>1/</u>

1/ Denotes totals of previous week.

10. Some of these violations may have been initiated by GVN forces rather than Communist forces, and it is impossible in all cases to determine the actual instigator. The table above and the charts on

the following pages, however, do show fairly accurately the trend in the amount of combat that has occurred in South Vietnam since the ceasefire. The fact that a combat incident occurred at a particular time and place is generally reported accurately by the South Vietnamese, even though the question of who started it may not always be treated in objective fashion.

B. Laos

11. There was no significant military activity in Laos last week.

III. Other Developments Affecting Communist Capabilities in Indochina

A. Communist Rice Shortages in GVN MR-3

12. The worsening Communist rice supply situation in southern South Vietnam [redacted]

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[redacted] apparently is a prime cause of reported Communist intentions to increase significantly the level of military activity in western GVN MR-3 in the near future. [redacted]

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[redacted] the purpose of the offensive actions will be:

--To force ARVN into a defensive posture so that the Communists can obtain rice crops.

--To protect rice crops in Communist controlled areas to insure an uninterrupted rice harvest.

--To take counter action against the GVN economic blockade which has had some effect.

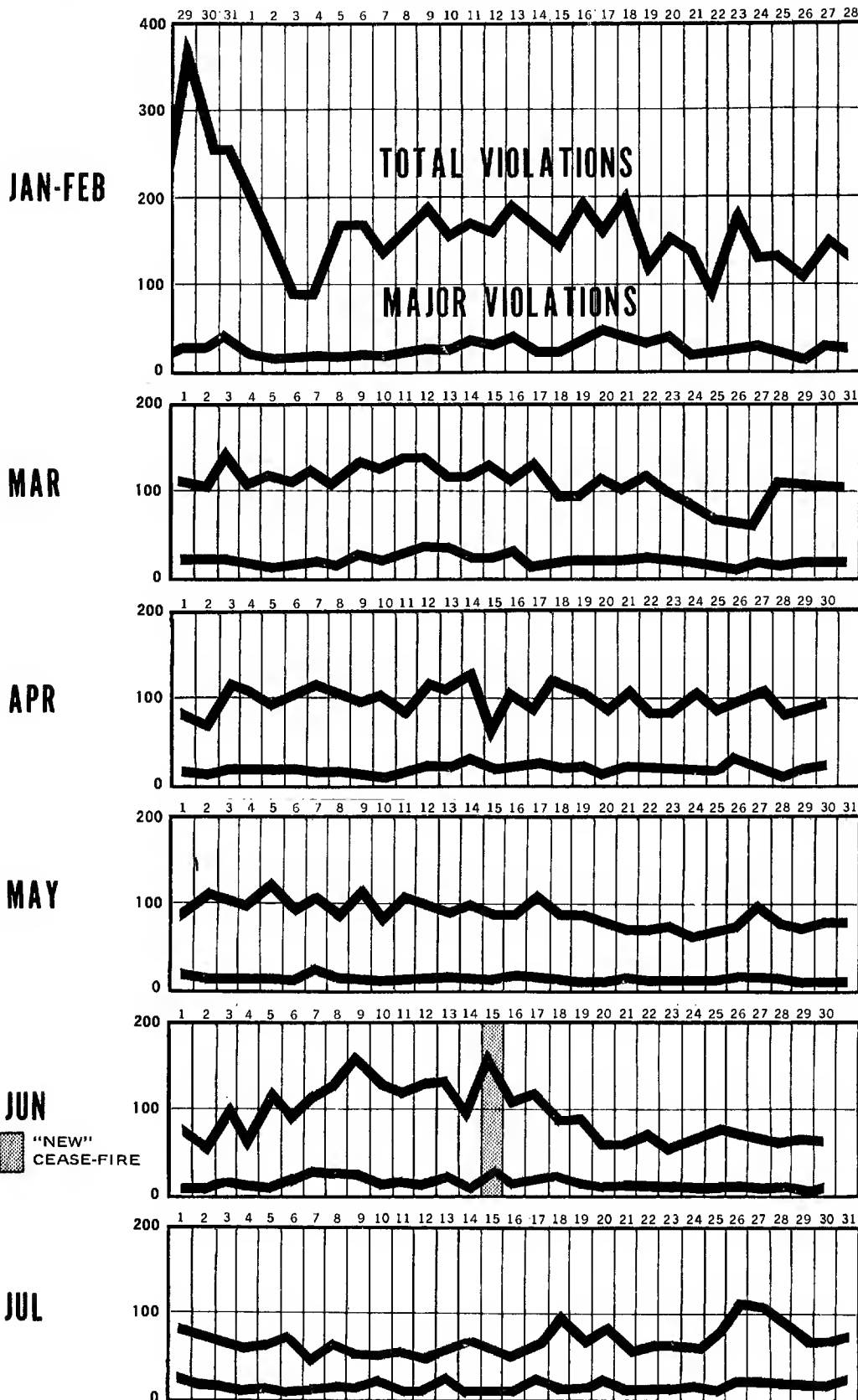
In addition to their planned military efforts to alleviate the worsening rice availability situation, the North Vietnamese are also planning to expand their economic efforts (see B below.)

(See Reverse Side of Page)



CEASE-FIRE VIOLATIONS IN SOUTH VIETNAM AS REPORTED BY RVNAF

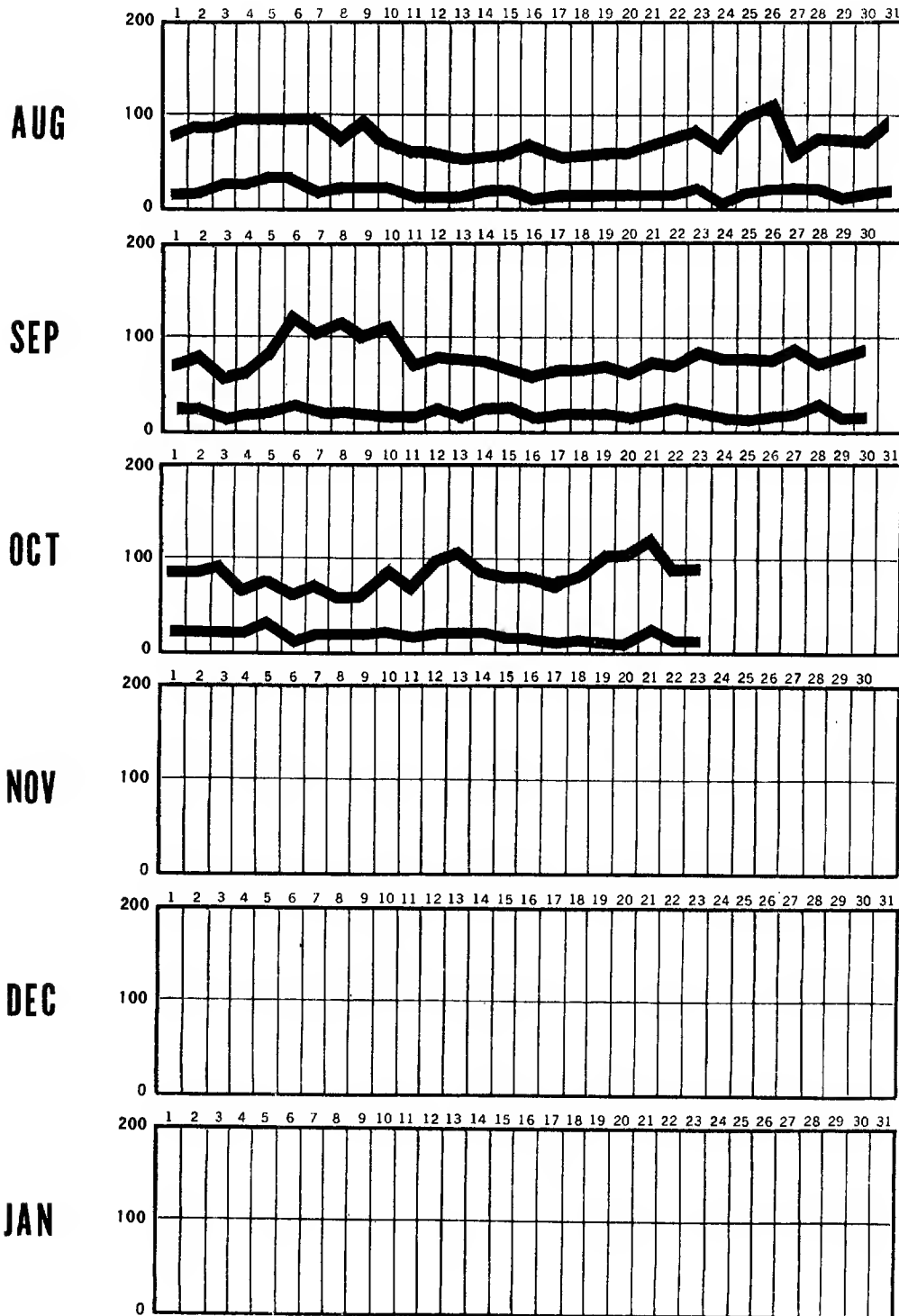
(28 JANUARY THROUGH 31 JULY 1973)





CEASE-FIRE VIOLATIONS IN SOUTH VIETNAM AS REPORTED BY RVNAF

(1 AUGUST 1973 TO THE PRESENT)



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13. The rice shortage reportedly is the result of a poor rice crop in Communist held areas as well as the cessation of rice deliveries from the Khmer Communists in Cambodia to South Vietnam. In the past, Cambodian rice deliveries have met a significant portion of the rice requirement of VC/NVA forces in GVN MR-3.

14. The criticality of the situation was underscored by a COSVN cadre at a policy briefing when he reportedly stated that "Rice is now a life or death matter, directly affecting our struggle in 1974." Whether that "struggle" be military or political, the Communists must ensure that internal supply problems in MR-3 are solved if they hope to achieve any substantial success. Nonetheless, the North Vietnamese do have the option--although it would be unprecedented--of shipping rice from North Vietnam to GVN MR-3 if a severe shortage persists.

B. Communists Press Economic Activities Deeper into Southern South Vietnam

15. Communist political and rear services cadres are apparently undertaking a wide range of economic projects designed to strengthen their hold on the Ben Suc area of Binh Duong Province just 30 miles north of Saigon (see map). [redacted]

[redacted] the Viet Cong have formulated plans to build several mills and plants during the coming year and have already established a system of cooperative stores for Communist cadre and military personnel in the Ben Suc area. The Viet Cong also have been recruiting laborers to work on the nearby Michelin rubber plantation and are providing tractors, plows, and farm tools to rear service units and civilians along with instructions to increase food production. To facilitate economic trading and the flow of supplies into the area, the Communists have secured and improved roads linking Ben Suc with rear bases along the Cambodian border, and in early September reportedly initiated a regular ferry service across the Saigon River just north of the town.

16. In another development, major elements of the Viet Cong Binh Duong Provincial Unit Headquarters

had moved to the Ben Suc vicinity by mid-October. These headquarters elements had continuously occupied the same base area in eastern Binh Duong since at least 1967, and such a move is without precedent. The relocations at this time may be related to the planning and preparation for economic activities around Ben Suc.

17. The purposes of the Communists' economic program are to increase the quantity of supplies they are able to produce and collect locally and to generate political support among the South Vietnamese population by making them economically dependent upon the Viet Cong. Similar efforts to stimulate economic development in Communist controlled territory have been reported, particularly along the Cambodian border in northern MR-3. But aside from the purchasing of goods in GVN controlled territory and the distribution of small loans to Viet Cong sympathizers, the Communist economic activities around Ben Suc are the closest to South Vietnamese controlled territory and population centers in MR-3 reported thus far.

C. Communists Increase Coastal Infiltration of Supplies into South Vietnam's Lower Delta

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18. [] Communist coastal resupply deliveries to base areas along the western coast of South Vietnam's southern MR-4 indicate an increase in activity over the past several months. [] the Communists have shifted to sea transportation because ARVN units have interdicted the major overland corridor used to resupply the lower delta from stocks in southern Cambodia. Reports of coastal offloading usually surge at this time of year, however, as seasonal flooding restricts the Communists' mobility along the land routes.

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19. The available reporting suggests that the coastal shipments originate in Cambodia, where the Communists control a substantial part of the southern coast. Deliveries are most frequently made by 5 to 15-ton fishing vessels which offload onto sampans about a mile offshore. The sampans reportedly carry the supplies to nearby inland waterways

for further transport to inland rear services areas. A large part of the cargo is apparently ammunition, but in some cases troops are also infiltrated by sea. Several weeks ago, for example, four fishing boats reportedly landed in northern An Xuyen Province and unloaded an undetermined amount of 60-mm and 81-mm mortar rounds and a company of troops. Because the high volume of fishing traffic in this area makes detections of vessels carrying illegal cargoes extremely difficult, such activities are likely to continue.

D. Recent Satellite Photography Results
Over North Vietnam

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20. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The mission showed sizable quantities of armor and artillery in several storage areas located north and south of Hanoi. With one exception, however, there were no significant differences between the current inventories and those recorded in early August. About 300 field and AAA pieces were seen at the Trieng Xen artillery park 40 miles southwest of Hanoi--an increase of about 100 pieces since August. This increase could represent either new equipment deliveries or an effort by the North Vietnamese to centralize storage of their artillery in the wake of the bombing halt. Ninety percent of the Vinh Yen armored training center was photographed. About 130 tanks were observed, some 40 more than when the complex was seen in early August. Included were 24 Soviet T54/55 or Chinese Type 59 tanks and 15 PT-63 tanks parked between storage sheds. These tanks were not parked there in early August and this in turn suggests that these tanks may have arrived fairly recently via rail from China.

21. The photography did not provide any indications of recent military deliveries through the international facilities at Dong Dang/P'ing-hsiang and the port of Haiphong, although both areas showed continuing moderate levels of transfer activity. Partial coverage of the Dong Dang Truck Parks showed some

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1,600 vehicles--mostly cargo trucks and miscellaneous equipment in storage. This was about the same number observed in early August, although it was apparent that some of the earlier inventory had since been removed from the area.

22. Coverage of the DRV panhandle was sparse. The Vinh rail yard and the nearby Hon Nieu coastal anchorage both showed considerable transloading activity. There also was an increase in stockpiles at the Vinh rail yard, and a Chinese freighter and a DRV tanker were anchored at Hon Nieu.

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ANNEX B

Post-Ceasefire Infiltration of North Vietnamese
Personnel to the South

1. The North Vietnamese will continue the southward movement of regular combat infiltration groups for an unspecified period of time. On 20 October, an intercepted message from Binh Tram (BT) 8 in the Vinh area stated that one group per day was to be sent southward, beginning on the 20th. Although no indication was provided either as to the period involved or the composition or destination of the groups, the receiver of the message was to "send them out at 1800 hours...to maintain secrecy." The validity of this message was substantiated on 21 October, when Group 5086, consisting of 756 troops, was observed entering the infiltration pipeline in the BT 8 area; and with the subsequent detection of groups 5087 and 5088 in the same area. The strengths of these groups, all of which are traveling towards southern Laos, are considerably higher than normal.

2. During the past week, one other regular combat group (5069) also was observed starting toward southern Laos, but it was previously included in our estimate as a "gap-filled" group and thus does not represent any increase in the level of infiltration starts. Finally, one small infiltration group destined for northern GVN MR-1 and comprised of about 25 administrative cadre also was noted entering the pipeline in North Vietnam.

3. Further evidence was received during the past week regarding the ultimate destination of some of the personnel who recently have infiltrated southward in 5xxx - series groups. In an intercepted enemy message between two unidentified elements of Rear Services Group 473--which operates primarily in northern MR-1 of South Vietnam--it was revealed that some 150 of group 5083's 612 troops were to be "turned over" to the NVA 968th Infantry Division and to Rear Services Group 472. Another message intercepted

between elements of the 572d Commo-Liaison Regiment on 21 October revealed that the 533 members of Group 5085 were bound for the 29th Independent Regiment near Muong Phalane. These messages indicate the NVA intend to keep up the strength of their combat units in southern Laos and do not plan to withdraw them from Laos anytime soon.

4. In a related 19 October message, it was revealed that some 30 groups were to move into the 574th Commo-Liaison Regiment's area of operations in the southern part of the Laotian Panhandle to "reinforce the unit and the battlefield" over an unspecified period of time. Thus far, intercepts have revealed 26 groups heading toward south Laos. This reference to the disposition of infiltrating troops also suggests that they will be allocated to both combat and administrative services units. Because females are included in these 30 groups, however, it is likely that some of the personnel to be received by the 574th Regiment are specialists. Table 1 below shows the pattern of total infiltration starts, including specialists, since 1 January 1973, while Table 2 compares the southward movement of combat troops since 1 September by destination with the same period in 1972.

Table 1

Number of Personnel Entering the Pipeline
Destined for South Vietnam, Southern
Laos, and Cambodia Since 1 January 1973

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Special-Purpose</u>
January	20,000	1,600
February	10,200	2,100
March	3,250	2,250
April	1,925	1,200
May	7,175	300
June	2,200	700
July	3,650	600
August	2,200	700
September	7,000	0
October 1-23	11,825	325

Table 2

Comparative Starts by Combat Troops From
North Vietnam, by Destination
1 September - 23 October*

	<u>1972</u>	<u>1973</u>
Total	<u>12,000</u>	<u>18,500</u>
MR Tri-Thien-Hue	9,000	2,000
MR 5	1,500	2,000
B-3 Front	0	0
COSVN	500	0
Southern Laos/MR 559	1,000	14,500

* This table covers the infiltration of North Vietnamese troops to South Vietnam, Cambodia, and southern Laos. Infiltrators moving to northern Laos are not included.

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